

The Winter Blues, Managing the Blues and Seeking Happiness Too.

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What are the winter blues?

- The dark and cold months of the year force us indoors.
- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Grief
- Vulnerability

Danger signs

- S.A.D. – seasonal affective disorder
- Clinical Depression
- Suicidal feelings

Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Related to the change of seasons
- 5 months of sadness – starts in late fall and goes til spring or summer
- Symptoms
 - Listlessness
 - Sad most of the day and nearly every day
 - Loss of interest in enjoyable activities
 - Sleeping too much
 - Weight gain, and carb cravings
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Hopeless
 - Little interest in living

SADNESS	CLINICAL DEPRESSION
Related to a specific loss or event	General sadness
Able to experience some joy	No joy
Responds to support and caring	Does not respond
Temporary impact on self-esteem	Longer period of low self-esteem
Guilt about a specific situation	Generalized guilt
May express anger	May be irritable

Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Hotline 1-800-273-8255
- Montgomery County Crisis Hotline 240-777-4000

Managing the Winter Blues

- Journaling
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Nature
- Reaching out to others
- And more

Journaling. Writing helps us to understand and organize our thoughts.

- “I don’t know what I think until I see what I’ve said.”
- W. H. Auden
- “I don’t know what I mean till I see what I’ve said.”
- C. S. Lewis

Sleep

- Go to bed at the same time.
- No exercise after 8 pm
- No serious discussions right before bedtime
- Read something relaxing and inspiring before bed.
- No late night news.
- Recount what went well during your day.
- Open your window.
- Deep breaths; meditation

Exercise helps

- Metabolism changes during the lifespan
 - Young people and meditative exercise
 - Older people and physical exercise
- Exercise your lungs
- Exercise helps every organ of your body including your brain

Nature

Nature compels the brain's attention with little or no effort. As a result, the stressed mind and body relax.

– Lisa Napolitano

Reach out to others.

- Make eye contact with others.
- Call a friend or family member regularly and frequently.
- Make time to be with others:
 - Support groups
 - Social groups
 - Educational groups
 - Religious and spiritual groups

More...

- Music
- Gratitude
 - Mayo Clinic “Discover Gratitude” program. Free.
www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/gratitude
- Inspirational or Spiritual reading
- Meditation
- Take time to appreciate the present moment.
- Laughter

The Global Blues and Global Grief

The Pandemic. The national and International political situations.
Humanitarian challenges. Climate change.

- These are threats of loss to our sense of well-being and security.
- They are evolving on a day-to-day, and week-to-week basis. Sometimes they evolve for the better, sometimes for the worse.
- The losses that we are experiencing in the world are ambiguous losses. They continue to evolve.
- We are collectively grieving these losses.
- Global Blues and Global Grief may intensify the Winter Blues.

The Pandemic and the world situation are ambiguous losses for which we grieve.

- They continue to evolve.
- To grieve the global ambiguous losses, we need to accept the paradox of fear and hope.
 - For example: I am afraid that I will get covid, but I am fully vaccinated, and that gives me hope.
- Other examples of grieving ambiguous losses

Accepting the paradox of **fear** and **hope**

In this uncertain time, we can maintain hope through

- Engaging in social and political action.
- Managing our fears and anger so we won't add more confusion to the world.
- Spreading kindness in our community
- Being kind to ourselves and others.
- Practicing spiritual activities
- Expressing gratitude

With these losses comes grief and the painful thoughts and feelings of grief

- Anger and fear, sadness, guilt and shame, spiritual pain, vulnerability, loneliness.
- Because we are grieving globally and are all a little crazy, we are less sensitive to grief in others, and less able to be supportive of others.

Be kind

Be kind to yourself.

Be kind to others.

Be understanding of others and of yourself.

Give space to others.

Set Boundaries

- Personal boundaries
- Set boundaries with others.

Happiness

Happiness can just happen. At those times we call it a miracle.

We can be inspired by those who are already happy.

It can be a choice. We can return to happiness again and again.

It can be an act of courage.

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